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ABSTRACT

Two issues that bear directly on the proficiency of teachers are teacher selection and teacher supervision. A theme common to both issues is that the key to attracting and retaining capable teachers lies in a transformation of teachers' work environment--replacing the bureaucratic model of schooling with the professional model. That transformation can be effected with the help of competent selection and supervision practices. The first part of this report summarizes pioneering studies that have examined the teacher selection process in school districts. It also explores support systems for beginning teachers and the role of school organizational structures in encouraging capable young teachers to remain in the profession. The second part of the report discusses collegial observation and feedback as a means of bringing quality instructional leadership to schools. Instructional leadership can be a collective activity, drawing on the strengths and expertise of more persons than just the principal. The report examines why such observation and feedback is difficult. It also considers some of the benefits of and approaches to collegial observation and feedback. A reference list is included. (PS)

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IMPROVING SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH REFORM OF TEACHER SELECTION PRACTICES AND COLLEGIAL OBSERVATION OF CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

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Quality teaching is the goal common to all efforts to reform the nation's school systems. Two issues that bear directly on the proficiency of teachers deserve more attention by policy-makers and educators alike. If teacher selection practices are as flawed as some recent studies suggest, school districts may not be able to benefit from current efforts to upgrade teacher training. Other studies have found that the supervision teachers receive from principals falls far short of what is necessary to improve teachers' performance. School systems can make up for this deficiency in part by having teachers observe one another's classrooms. A theme common to both issues is that the key to attracting and retaining capable people to teaching lies in a transformation of teachers' work environment--replacing the bureaucratic model of schooling with the professional model.

Teacher Competency Begins with Teacher Selection: Attracting Achievers and Leaders to the Teaching Profession

Because the quality of education is largely determined by teachers, the issue of teacher competency is at center stage of all attempts to improve education. The quality of this nation's teacher corps is shaped by those who major in education, those who are hired, and those who stay in the profession. At every stage in the preparation, selection, and retention of teachers, the issue of competency surfaces.

Yet recommendations for reform are often simplistic, customarily focusing only on teacher preparation and higher admission standards at teacher training institutions. Although the training and skills of prospective teachers are of obvious importance, improving teacher training is only a partial solution. After individuals are trained and their skills verified, school districts must then select the best candidates to become teachers. If districts, for whatever reason, bypass the best candidates in favor of the mediocre, even the best efforts of teacher training institutions will be for naught.

This section of the chapter summarizes pioneering studies that have examined the teacher selection process in school districts. It also explores support systems for beginning teachers and the role of school organizational structures in encouraging capable young teachers tc remain in the profession.

The Lower Academic Performance of Education Majors

Statistics about who goes into teaching are familiar to educators and laymen alike. College students who major in education are, as a group,

less academically able than most other college students. Between 1972 and 1982, the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of students who indicated a preference for teaching declined more steeply than did the national overall scores. Graduate Record Examination scores of education majors declined significantly between 1970 and 1982 (Kerr, 1983). The average cumulative grade point average (GPA) of education majors was lower than that of non-education majors--2.72 compared to 2.97 (Sykes, 1983).

The trend is not a recent one. Historically, education majors as a group have ranked low compared to other students on measures of academic ability and achievement. Sykes (1983) reports that as early as 1928 standardized test scores for students in education were lower than for those in any other college major. Between 1951 and 1953, education majors scored lowest among the men who took the Selective Service Qualifying Test, an examination of both verbal and qualitative ability. Perhaps little has changed except the amount of public attention drawn to the qualifications of potential teachers, which has undeniably increased.

The quality of teacher training institutions has come under increasing public scrutiny. Commentators have questioned both the admission standards of training programs and the rigor of the training itself. They encourage the institutions to recruit students with higher achievement records and to guarantee their graduates' basic skills competency, subject area mastery, and pedagogical prowess.

One would think that those teacher education graduates who have the "best" academic qualifications would have a distinct advantage in securing a teaching position. But could it be that in the midst of the rhetoric about the qualifications of student teachers and the quality of training institutions, school districts themselves do not seek the most academically talented graduates? Could school districts be contributing to the problem of teacher competency by failing to hire the most qualified candidates?

Are the Best Hired?

Recent studies support a hypothesis proposed by Weaver in 1979: methods used to select and place teachers do not result in more academically competent teachers being hired. In Weaver's study, subjects who had lower test scores on four out of five measures of competence in mathematics, reading, and vocabulary were more likely to be teaching than those who had higher test scores. Granted, the design of Weaver's study did not allow him to distinguish between those who did and those who did not actively seek teaching positions. In research designed to allow that discrimination, Perry (1981) found that the "best" candidates (as measured by their GPA, evaluation of their student teaching, and professional recommendations) were not favored in hiring. Neither were the "worst" favored. Therefore, Perry concluded that academic criteria apparently do not significantly affect the job-hunting experience of graduates.

One could predict that teacher selection would be most rigorous during periods of teacher surplus. Yet if the experience of the Dallas (Texas) School District is typical, a surplus of candidates is no guarantee that districts will hire those most academically qualified. Perry (1981) reports that in 1977--a "surplus" year in Dallas--55% of the newly hired teachers in the district failed a basic skills test whereas 36% of the total number of applicants failed. Deficiencies in the hiring process seemed to have actually favored those applicants who failed above those who earned higher scores.

In another study by Browne and Rankin (1986), superior cognitive skills did not predict employment as a teacher. No significant relation was found between scores on the National Teacher Examination and success in finding a job. In fact, being rated as "bright" by a college supervising teacher was negatively related to employment. Calling for further research into hiring processes, Browne and Rankin conclude that personality factors may be more important than knowledge in determining whether or not an applicant is selected.

Admittedly, these findings may not be generalizable; future studies should attempt replication in other settings. The selection of teachers has received little attention from either researchers or practitioners. Compared with other areas of educational research, studies of hiring practices are few, validation of procedures is minimal, recommendations for well-intentioned personnel directors are limited.

The task of improving selection is complicated by the fact that research on the prediction of teaching performance has failed to produce definite answers. Calculating the effects of grade point average and test scores upon teaching performance is a difficult task because of the restricted range of study: because the grades and scores of individuals admitted to and graduated from teacher preparation institutions tend to be homogeneous, correlations between academic performance and teaching performance are masked (Kahl, 1980). Nonetheless, some studies show significant links among grade point average, student teaching performance, and success as a beginning teacher (Bueker, 1972; Jenkins, 1977; Fratianni, 1979).

The question of a teacher's cognitive ability may not be raised in hiring interviews, but it certainly is raised in many procedures for the dismissal of incompetent teachers. During actual investigations of teachers dismissed for incompetency, supervisors noted the following teacher deficiencies: lack of skill and ability to perform instructional duties, weak intellectual ability, inadequate knowledge of subject matter, and poor judgment skills. Lack of motivation and emotional stability are less frequently cited causes of incompetence (Bridges, 1986).

The trend toward testing teachers represents one attempt to improve the competency of educators and to placate the public. Some states require passing scores on basic skills tests before admission to teachers' training; others mandate basic skills or pedagogical examinations prior to certification. In 12 states teachers are tested both before entering

training institutions and before certification. The tests may screen out candidates with failing scores, but they are not intended as predictive instruments that would assist districts in identifying candidates with superior skills. Although the tests partially satisfy the demand for higher standards, they by no means completely resolve the teacher competency issue.

Methods of Teacher Selection

The process by which candidates are commonly selected for employment as teachers may explain in part why the academically "best" are not more likely to be hired. While administrators might agree that the hiring of teachers is one of their most important functions, they do not typically devote a significant amount of time, energy, and funds to recruit and select the most capable candidates. Most school districts do not have established policies for selection. Most school administrators appear to lack training in systems that would increase their odds in finding the best teacher (see, for example, Kahl, 1980 and Lewis, 1983).

Although the interview is widely considered the least reliable selection tool, it is the most frequently used. The average interview is conducted by untrained personnel and stands little chance of being a representative slice of the applicant's life, an accurate measure of teacher competence. Typically the interview is unstructured, lasts less than one hour, and is highly influenced by first impressions, appearance, nonverbal behavior, and conversational skills. Such unstructured interviews allow the applicant to offer a fictionalized version of himself or herself, responding in socially desirable ways to cues in the interviewers' questions or manner. Business has a term for it: the "old school tie syndrome," descriptive of the fact that interviewers tend to prefer applicants similar to themselves.

School principals have been shown to be attracted to teacher candidates whose attitudes are similar to their own. In fact, Merritt (1971) found that interviewers of prospective teachers were more swayed by the congruence of their and the candidates' attitudes than by the candidates' qualifications.

Perhaps the good schools get better and the poor schools continue to deteriorate. Uniform views about education and the school may produce an efficient staff, but how much weight should employers give to likemindedness relative to applicants' qualifications? To what extent should an effective school staff seek diversity among its members? Are teacher candidates selected because they in some way match the school's current quality? If so, strong schools get stronger, weak schools weaker.

Industrial employment recruiters who visit college campuses typically ask to see only those students who have GPA's above 3.0, who have held a position of leadership in a campus organization, and who have had successful job experience. In short, they look for achievers and leaders. And that assumes that GPA is related not only to ability, but also to work habits, determination, and accountability.

An increasingly accepted theory in industrial research contends that employees' general cognitive ability predicts their knowledge of a job and hence their performance in that job. The more complex the job, the more the generalization applies: higher ability workers are faster in cognitive operations on the job, better able to prioritize between conflicting rules, better able to adapt old procedures to new situations, and better able to learn new procedures quickly as the job changes over time (Hunter, 1983).

In contrast, school district employers may seek teachers recommended as enthusiastic, dependable, desirous of working hard, cooperative, and able to benefit from advice (Mortalani, 1974). Without denying their importance, one must ask how well those descriptors alone predict an applicant's ability to master the complex tasks of teaching--organization of curriculum, assessment of group and individual needs, interaction with parents and community. One must also ask whether "able to benefit from advice" is consistent with the perception of teachers as responsible professionals and as central participants in schools' decision-making process.

Unlike industry, school districts may not be looking for achievers and leaders. When superintendents in one midwestern state responded to this statement, "Candidates with GPA's from 2.5-3.5 are preferred to candidates with GPA's from 3.6-4.0," only 59% disagreed (Jarchow, 1981).

Let us not overstate the case. As Sisk (1969) says, it is personal and social characteristics that "make a teacher out of a scholar." After screening teacher candidates for cognitive ability and achievement, employers must appropriately seek signs of commitment, integrity, empathy, energy, and, yes, magic. Looking for the teacher-scholar means shedding some stereotypes, admitting that the English teacher can be equally concerned about Shakespeare and adolescents and that the first-grade teacher can enhance a child's linguistic prowess as well as his or her self-concept. Employers need not choose between academically qualified educators and compassionate, dedicated teachers. In fact, better qualified teachers are often more self-confident and more able to strengthen their school community than are other teachers.

Who Stays in Teaching

Improved hiring procedures alone will not guarantee the academic quality of the teacher workforce. That quality is influenced not only by who enters the teaching profession but by who stays. About 15% leave after their first year of teaching. An additional 10% leave in both the second and the third years, and after six years, a total of nearly 50% have left (Schlechty & Vance, 1981). Low pay and morale are the most frequently cited reasons for the high rate of attrition. Of course, turnover among newcomers is also high in other organizations: newcomers to industrial and educational settings often bring unrealistic expectations to the job, face isolation, and encounter a sink-or-swim philosophy.

Beginning teachers report receiving little coaching or support during their first years of employment, known as the induction period. When

informal support is available, they perceive it as greater in value than formal support. Although the presence of support is not the determining factor in most beginning teachers' decisions to continue teaching or leave the profession, support is a contributing factor in those decisions (Isaacson, 1982; Clewitt, 1984).

Programs such as the mentor teacher project in California match new teachers with experienced, talented teachers. The structure of the mentor program combines formal and informal aspects: the beginning teacher has legitimate access to a colleague who can reduce the complexities the new job presents. From discussing the math curriculum to untangling the social expectations of the staff room, the mentor can be a sounding board for the newcomer's questions and concerns. In a related trend, several states propose to consider the first year of teaching as an internship, one that includes increased supervision of the beginning teacher by peers and administrators who provide helpful feedback.

Educators are at least as influenced as other workers to change jobs because of wage differences between their current and potential positions (Baugh & Stone, 1982). Teaching lacks "careerism"--a chance to advance in the profession without leaving the profession. Unlike the likelihood in other professions, in most states increased competency does not lead to positions of increased responsibility and compensation. Instead, minimal financial rewards are offered only for endurance.

Working conditions are also cited by teachers who leave education. Teachers in the higher ability ranges leave teaching in greater proportion than do those in the lower ability ranges. There seems to be a correlation: teachers of higher ability are more likely to attribute their discontent to their lack of input into decisions, inadequate resources for classrooms, restrictive controls, and inadequate leadership and support by school administrators (Darling-Hammond, 1984).

Recruiting and hiring the most capable teachers are clearly only the first steps in improving educational staffs. School systems must also provide support during the beginning teacher's induction period, accord more respect to teachers as accomplished professionals, and fashion compensation commensurate with new levels of career responsibility. Raising requirements for teacher candidates is not sufficient. Making the teaching profession and the school environment attractive to achievers and leaders is the more significant issue.

The Incompetent Teacher

The low status of the teaching profession is undeniably linked to the presence of incompetent teachers. Although they are estimated to comprise only five percent of the nation's teachers, the incompetent teachers gather a disproportionate share of public attention. Incompetent teachers inhibit students' learning, consume administrators' time, and tarnish the reputation of colleagues (Bridges, 1984, 1986).

Despite the damage done by incompetent members, teachers and administrators alike often ignore and protect the individual. Confronting the incompetent teacher, documenting deficiencies, and attempting remediation are time- and emotion-consuming actions. Programs of collegial support may well experience their severest testing when applied to the issue of the incompetent professional.

Dealing with incompetent educators provides a glimpse into how teachers may have to reconcile issues of collective bargaining and professional forms of governance. The dilemma of the teachers' unions, for example, is twofold: as professional organizations, the unions seek a reputation for promoting excellence, yet as representatives of all members, they owe each teacher fair representation. Most administrators say that the unions resolve the dilemma justly; they are a constructive force in evaluating the situation and advising the incompetent teacher to leave the profession (Bridges, 1986). Union leaders attempt to defend the teacher's right to due process without defending the teacher's deficiencies. In the local school, teachers assisting in that teacher's remediation walk the same tightrope.

Implications and Recommendations

Raising the professionalism of teachers clearly should not end with upgrading standards of admission and programs in teacher training institutions. Between 1986 and 1990, nearly one million teachers will be hired in the United States (Plisko, 1983). In California alone, which employs 170,000 teachers, over 110,000 will be hired in that same period (Honig, in Johnston, 1985). Writing about the effort and investment it takes to dismiss incompetent teachers, Bridges (1986) calls these statistics a "window of opportunity" for school districts, but one fraught with perils as well as possibilities. He recommends concentrating scarce district resources on the recruitment, selection, evaluation, and development of probationary teachers. Bridges warns that the history of inadequate teachers will repeat itself unless better selection methods are devised.

This major influx of new teachers provides school districts with the opportunity to upgrade dramatically the competency of their teachers. But if districts are to take advantage of this opportunity, they must reform their teacher selection practices. As a beginning, school boards need to adopt written policies that (a) declare the districts' commitment to hire the most qualified teachers, (b) establish guidelines of fairness to candidates, (c) require intensive job analyses prior to hiring, and (d) encourage validation of locally developed procedures.

Next, districts must provide key administrators with training to be able to identify the "best" prospective teachers and with time to be able to recruit them. Active recruitment--"getting there first"--is particularly important for inner-city and rural districts that have a shortage of candidates, and for any employers seeking teachers in high-demand subject areas. Training of employers is essential because no one test or procedure offers any magic answer to the selection of teachers. The role of the teacher is a complex one, requiring a wide variety of professional and

personal skills. Districts can acknowledge that complexity by using selection teams to increase the reliability of interviews and by seeking a wide range of information about each candidate.

A combination of factors predicts teacher performance. Districts can screen candidates initially on ability and achievement measures--grades, student teaching performance, scores on basic skills and verbal ability tests, and letters of recommendation. Next, districts can measure personal and practical skills through highly structured interviews, live or video-taped demonstrations of teaching, and lesson designs. Locally designed criteria can and must be validated at the local level: three years later, do teachers hired under these particular criteria in this particular district earn demonstrably better evaluations than teachers hired under less stringent procedures?

It is relatively easy to develop selection procedures that look good on paper. School districts can adopt policies that proclaim fairness and enthrone excellence, but no matter how good the criteria appear on paper, members of selection teams must ask themselves in what way their choices may be influenced by an attraction to applicants of similar attitudes or abilities. Those judging applicants must consciously examine the competencies needed in the vacant position, as well as their own attitudes toward education, their school, and prospective staff members. Painfully, members of selection teams must study their faculty's weaknesses, looking for gaps in their talents or perspectives. Filling those gaps can mean hiring an individual who will contrast, perhaps even conflict, with existing skills and norms. The task is an awesome one: it means appreciating the power of potential group members and yet knowing just how much diversity to embrace. One question should appropriately guide the interview: "Who can get this job done?" In other words, who can both promote student learning and contribute to this professional team?

Cycles can be broken at many points. If a cycle of mediocrity or of destructive competitivism is to be broken, recruiting and hiring the most competent graduates from teacher training institutions can begin to break that cycle. Selection teams can strengthen educational programs not by asking which applicants "fit in" to their school in the present but by asking: Which applicants are most likely to help forge the best possible school in five or ten years? Which will provide leadership in curricular evaluation? Which will show sound judgment in participative decision-making? Which might someday be considered a "master" or "mentor"?

The cycle can be broken in yet another way. Capable candidates seek effective schools. Schools that offer good working conditions for teachers--environments characterized by cohesion and support, collegiality and professionalism--attract outstanding educators. Perhaps more important, they retain outstanding educators. Organizational vitality and teachers' competency interrelate as mutual cause and effect.

Improving School Effectiveness Through Collegial Observation and Feedback

The discovery of characteristics that distinguish effective schools from less effective schools is one of the major achievements of recent educational research. One consistent research finding is that effective schools have vigorous instructional leaders who set high expectations for student achievement, clearly communicate instructional goals to teachers, carefully monitor student progress, and regularly observe teachers' performance in class to help them improve.

As these and other findings about effective schools have been publicized, one effect has been to raise everyone's expectations about how schools and their teachers and principals should perform. Now all principals are expected to imitate their "effective" colleagues and pay more attention to instruction. The education reform movement seems to have been fueled in part by expectations such as these.

The question of whether all principals can indeed become effective instructional leaders needs to be addressed. Researchers have in fact found relatively few principals who match the portrait of effective leadership. To view the performance of exemplary leaders as the norm may be counterproductive, serving only to frustrate the majority. Fortunately, there are alternative ways of bringing quality instructional leadership to the schools. Although the recommendations and proposed models vary, they all assume that instructional leadership can be a collective activity, drawing on the strengths and expertise of others than just the principal.

Here our attention focuses on one activity of instructional leadership that can be ably performed by teachers. Researchers agree that regular classroom observation has great potential for fostering a schoolwide commitment to ongoing instructional improvement, a hallmark of an effective school. Little and Bird (1984) state, "Observing and being observed, giving and getting feedback about one's work in the classroom, may be among the most powerful tools of improvement" (p. 12).

We will consider some of the benefits of and proposed approaches to collegial observation and feedback after first examining why the performance of this activity is difficult even for those principals most adept at instructional leadership.

Limitations on the Principal's Role as Supervisor

Teacher supervision is a complex, sensitive, and time-consuming task. It requires a considerable range of knowledge and skills: knowledge of subject matter being taught; understanding of the instructional strategy being used; access to a range of data collection devices, along with training in how to use and interpret them; and recognition of suitable goals or outcomes for teachers. Because teachers are often defensive or threatened by the supervision/evaluation process, principals must also possess interpersonal skills that facilitate mutual trust.

Furthermore, supervision is time-consuming. For supervision to help teachers analyze and improve their practice, observations must take place more than once or twice a year. Six times per year is a reasonable expectation, according to veteran teacher educator Acheson (1986). For feedback to be most helpful, each observation must consist of a cycle of several events: a preobservation conference, the systematic collection of data by means of classroom visits and other means, and a postobservation conference in which data are shared and analyzed. The principal's minimum time investment is 2 hours per cycle or 12 hours per teacher per year. In a school with 30 teachers, this translates into 360 hours per year--again, this is a minimum--or roughly one-fourth of a principal's total time on the job.

Of course, principals have many other demands on their time, and these demands seem to be proliferating: crisis situations that interrupt even the best made plans, demands from the central office for myriad reports, and other essential duties of an instructional leader such as curriculum development and monitoring of student progress. Furthermore, the current trend in schools is toward increased involvement of principals in such managerial areas as personnel selection and supervision (both certified and classified), community relations, and building management. As Acheson (1986) wryly notes, "It is often easier to postpone the observation of a lesson than to keep the dads' club waiting or the contractor who has a steamroller parked at the door" (p. 4).

Finally, one of the most persistent problems in teacher supervision and evaluation is that the purposes of the activities differ. In his role as supervisor, the principal works with all teachers--good, average, and marginal--as a mentor who helps teachers develop skills and expand their repertoire of teaching strategies. This requires a high level of trust between teacher and supervisor. Yet principals are also responsible for evaluating teachers in order to make decisions about retention, promotion, and tenure. Evaluation is an intrinsically threatening activity, especially to marginal and inexperienced teachers who could benefit greatly from feedback. A principal must be highly adept at human relations if he or she is to balance the conflicting roles of mentor and judge effectively.

Is it any surprise, therefore, that researchers in John Goodlad's A Study of Schooling found little evidence that the principals were exercising instructional leadership (Tye & Tye, 1984)? Or that many teachers do not like the ways they are currently being supervised and evaluated (Natriello & Dornbusch, 1980-81)? If teachers view evaluation with suspicion, they are often justified: for many, their career status depends on one or two perfunctory observations by a supervisor who lacks expertise in their subject matter and in instructional methods.

The poor quality of much of the supervision teachers receive seems not to have soured them on the potential of supervision to help them. Acheson (1986) has found that teachers express a clear preference for an active instructional leader who meets with them individually, discusses their concerns, and provides constructive feedback on their teaching. Reporting on case studies of teacher evaluation practices, Stiggins and Bridgeford

(1985) state, "Repeatedly, teachers suggested more frequent formal and informal observations, greater use of peer observation and self-evaluation, and more effective preparation and training for evaluators" (p. 92).

Bird and Little (1985) conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of instructional leadership in eight secondary schools, two of which had principals who were particularly vigorous and effective instructional leaders. Although the teachers of these two principals were appreciative of the in-depth supervision they received, even these teachers were virtually unanimous in saying they wanted more supervision than they were getting.

It is apparent that principals face a multitude of stubborn obstacles in trying to be instructional leaders--particularly in giving helpful supervision to teachers. Consequently, the supply of supervision falls far short of the demand. If the potential of classroom observations for improving instruction is to be realized, the bottleneck of supervision at the principal's office must be solved.

Nevertheless, if others, such as teachers, are to assist with these tasks, the principal must still be regarded as the key actor in calling these new forms of instructional leadership into being. As Bird and Little (1985) state, "Other leadership is likely to require at least the tolerance, but more likely the active and direct support, of the principal" (pp. 2-5). According to these two researchers, principals have three options available to them: they can import leadership by bringing in district supervisors or others, supply leadership directly, or "organize the staff to provide leadership for each other" (pp. 1-3). It is this third option--particularly cultivating a pattern of collegial observation--that seems to hold the greatest promise for improving the practice of teaching and renewing the structure of schools.

Advantages of Collegiality

The collegial approach to classroom observations mobilizes the talents of teachers in a concerted effort to improve instruction. The chief advantage of collegiality, therefore, is that it marshalls the human resources necessary to accomplish the task. Besides improving instruction, collegiality can also bring other benefits.

First, collegiality is predicated on a view of teaching as a profession. A peer support network is, as Hopfengardner and Walker (1984) suggest, "the cornerstone of a profession" (p. 36) since professions are characterized by extensive peer review and standards of practice that evolve through the collective experience of practitioners. If teaching were to take on more of the characteristics of a profession, job satisfaction of teachers would increase and more capable individuals would likely be attracted to teaching as a career.

Another advantage of collegial support systems is that they involve a separation of classroom observation for professional development from evaluation for personnel decisions. The principal will still carry the formal title of supervisor and will retain responsibility for making personnel

decisions. There are obvious advantages to separating these two functions. First, teachers are more likely to trust their colleagues--whether they be department heads, "master teachers," or peers. Such a relationship of mutual trust helps to foster cooperation and makes teachers more receptive to feedback and willing to change. Consequently, collegial observation programs have the potential for generating a mutual and sustained interest among teachers in improvement and innovation. The school climate becomes one where teachers constantly talk to one another about teaching.

Alfonso and Goldsberry (1982) point to still another advantage of collegiality: "The successful introduction of instructional innovation is more likely in schools having active colleagueship."

Finally, assigning the major responsibility for classroom observation to teachers themselves will lighten the burden on the principal's time. The principal will be free to devote greater attention to other essential instructional leadership tasks such as coordinating the supervision process, planning curriculum development, managing incompetent teachers, communicating regularly with staff, and planning inservice activities.

Flexibility of Implementation

Collegial observation can take many different forms, depending on the needs of different schools. In large high schools, department heads often share certain aspects of instructional leadership with principals, particularly in curricular matters pertaining to their subject area. Because of their expertise in the subject area, they would not be prone to the skepticism often directed at principals in the course of an evaluation by teachers (who cannot see, for example, how a former math teacher is in a position to evaluate a foreign language class).

Entrusting department heads with this responsibility would, however, call for a redefinition of that role and some training in supervisory skills. Department heads would need additional released time from classes and a stipend for the added responsibilities. The payoff would be a more cohesive instructional program in each department, since the department head would be closely in touch with others' teaching. He or she would be in a better position to discuss common concerns and evaluate the overall program at staff meetings. Because the position of department head would gain considerable prestige in the process, this form of collegial support would be fully compatible with the various career ladder and differential staffing proposals that many schools are considering.

A more direct approach is to have teachers observe their peers. Teachers trained in systematic observation procedures would be ideally suited not only to provide constructive feedback to one another, but also to learn teaching techniques and strategies from one another. One modification of such a strictly egalitarian system might include a mentor approach, by which experienced teachers are assigned to help new teachers refine their skills and develop their repertoire. Such approaches would likewise involve adjustment in time schedules to give teachers the time to observe one another.

One particularly impressive model is the Stanford Collegial Evaluation Program, developed in the mid-1970s by Sanford Dornbusch, Terrence Deal, and other researchers at Stanford's Center for Research and Development in Teaching. The terminology of this program notwithstanding, teachers observe and give feedback to one another only for their professional development; they do not evaluate in the summative sense.

As Roper and Hoffman (1986) describe it, the Stanford program is a reciprocal arrangement in which teachers are paired off and each teacher in the pair is responsible for evaluating the other. The program has seven interrelated steps: (a) choosing a partner, (b) selecting criteria, (c) self-assessment, (d) evaluation by students, (e) observations, (f) conferences, and (g) planning a program of improvement. The entire sequence requires 10 to 12 hours spread over a month or two. Each of these activities is conducted reciprocally: partners jointly develop an agreed-upon set of criteria, assess themselves and each other, observe one another, and mutually develop plans for improvement.

In field tests of this program, the improvement plans resulting from this process covered the whole range of teaching techniques and behavior. In many cases, partners agreed to continue observing one another and to assess progress in implementing their plans. Thus the program was, in certain cases, spontaneously self-replicating: the improvement plans served as the criteria for the next round of observations. Although the teachers in the program learned a great deal from their colleagues' assessment of their teaching, many said they learned as much from observing their colleague.

Whatever type of program is adopted, teachers' organizations could be involved in its planning and implementation. Although these organizations tend to be wary of teachers' supervising or evaluating each other, they are normally enthusiastic about participating in staff development activities. Providing teachers' organizations with an active role in collegial support programs and in the setting of standards of competence within the profession could conceivably lead to a reduction in labor-management tension. Teachers' organizations might even come to resemble professional organizations rather than labor unions.

Obstacles to Collegiality

The chief obstacle to implementing peer-assisted instructional leadership appears to be the ingrained habits of teachers and administrators alike. In many schools--as A Study of Schooling (Goodlad, Sirotnik, & Overman, 1979) convincingly demonstrated--teachers practice their craft in virtual isolation from one another. Two mutually reinforcing factors fuel this norm of isolation. One is teachers' understandable reluctance to invite scrutiny of their work by others. They fear that the data gathered from classroom observations by their peers will be used against them in personnel decisions. Most teachers do not, for obvious reasons, relish the idea of their colleagues informing on them to the principal.

Also isolating teachers from one another is the school's structure. Bird and Little (1985) note that "the usual school schedule, day, and budget" provide "little opportunity or support for trying to make teaching a collective practice" (p. S-17). They found that those teachers who actively cooperated did so at their own personal cost: "considerable overtime was routine" (p. S-17). Thus, the school's structure, instead of providing teachers with opportunities to overcome their guardedness, actually impedes those teachers who wish to step outside it.

Other teacher and administrator attitudes likewise have been found to be injurious to collegiality. McFaul and Cooper (1984) found that "peer clinical supervision" did not work in a school context characterized by "isolation and fragmentation, stratification, standardization, and reactionism" (p. 7). On the positive side, collegiality requires a school context marked by norms of experimentation, mutual encouragement, and collective effort toward school improvement.

All these obstacles to collegiality need to be addressed during the implementation process. Teachers need to be assured that observation data will be kept strictly confidential and that personnel evaluation, conducted by the principal, will be a separate and independent process. The school's structure needs to be altered to reserve adequate time and resources for teachers to work with one another. And administrators and teachers must join together to build a school climate conducive to peer support.

Role of the Principal

The key actor in making all these changes is the principal. The authority and initiative of the principal are needed to displace norms of isolation and independence with norms of cooperation and continual improvement in practice. Principals also must provide the structural support--time, resources, programs.

A school that operates according to collegial norms must indeed have a different kind of principal than the traditional school that operates according to bureaucratic norms. As Alfonso and Goldsberry (1982) point out, coordinating professionals in the fluid context of collegial support is a complex task that "cannot be done through generating formal rules, or even standardized procedures." Consequently, a collegial school requires a higher caliber of leadership than does a bureaucratic school.

Some principals may justifiably be concerned that, in delegating some of their supervisory responsibilities to teachers, they are yielding authority over a process for which they will still be held accountable by the central office and the public. However, peer-assisted classroom observation does not require principals to abdicate leadership of the instructional process and indeed it will not succeed if they do so. Sharing of leadership with others is not abdication. Most observers would agree with Bird and Little (1985) that each "school is rich in potential leaders" and "that the question is how that leadership comes to be organized" (pp. 2-5). Peer-assisted leadership is not intended to operate independently of the principal but

under his or her direction. The principal's efforts are required, for example, to initiate collegiality among teachers, to train teachers in observation and conferral techniques, and to monitor and encourage the peer observation process in order to sustain its momentum.

Bird and Little found that schools in which teachers most highly approved of peer observation and practiced it most frequently had principals who demonstrated effective observation practices. Apparently, the teachers in a school became attracted to the idea of observing one another when they benefited from their principal's observations. In this way, the principal's modeling of helpful practices of supervision can help to catalyze peer observation.

In addition to the new roles as instigator, facilitator, and manager of the collegial support process, the principal will retain her or his role of personnel evaluator. It is commonly agreed that use of peer observations for personnel decisions would sabotage the process by engendering mutual mistrust and ill-will between teachers. This process could be conducted in the traditional way. That is, the principal could make two or three evaluations of each teacher per year to ensure that minimum competency standards are met.

But is it essential that every teacher be evaluated? It may not be necessary for the majority of experienced teachers, who would set and monitor goals for professional development through their participation in collegial observation. The principal could then focus attention on new teachers and those identified as needing improvement. This begs the question, however, as to how the principal is going to identify veteran teachers who begin to perform unsatisfactorily, if teachers are not permitted to share with the school's administrator troubling discoveries from their peer observations. Either the principal is going to have to evaluate every teacher--perhaps some less frequently than others--or will have to work out a suitable alternative arrangement with teachers that modifies the requirement of confidentiality. For example, one way to avoid jeopardizing the integrity of the peer review process may be to have principals consult with department heads as intermediaries. The staff of each school will have to arrive at their own solution to this dilemma.

If principals can be largely freed from the burden of evaluating every teacher, they will be able to direct their attention and expertise where it is needed the most: providing vision for and coordinating the process of collegial support, evaluation, professional development, and curriculum development in their schools.

Compatibility with Other Structural Reforms

Peer-assisted instructional leadership can be seen as part of the growing trend toward decentralization of authority in schools and professionalism among teachers. As such, it is fully compatible with such concepts as career ladders for teachers, team management, participative decision-making, and school-based management. These concepts involve

fundamental changes in the role of the principal, but also complementary changes in the roles of both teaching staff and district office. For example, the added authority conferred on a principal through school-based management would carry many new responsibilities, including budget allocation, curriculum design, and personnel selection. Team management and participative decision-making models have likewise been found to require more of the principal's time than traditional bureaucratic approaches to management.

Collegial support has the potential of freeing principals from a task which, if they were to do justice to it, would require a fourth of their time. This time could then be used to accommodate the additional responsibilities that go with greater school autonomy and collaborative modes of decision-making. At the same time, both school autonomy and teacher participation would be greatly enhanced by an enthusiastic and professional teaching staff committed to instructional improvement.

As a consequence, collegial support may be seen as both the precondition and the essence of a movement away from bureaucratic control and toward democratic school management--a movement that holds the overall promise of reorganizing schools to make them more responsive to the needs of the public.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rising expectations about the performance of principals and their schools, combined with a realization that principals face major obstacles in meeting those expectations, have fueled a search for alternative means of bringing instructional leadership to schools. One promising alternative is to have teachers observe and give feedback to one another for their professional improvement. Collegial support has been tested in a number of schools over the years, with mostly encouraging results. Now, in the midst of the reform movement and the growing interest in making teaching truly a profession, collegial support seems to be an especially appropriate response to conditions in today's schools.

The current appeal of peer observation is twofold. First, it makes a potent, research-validated method of instructional improvement--classroom observation of teaching--a more common occurrence in schools. And at the same time it transforms teachers' work environment and thereby elevates the status of teaching and enhances its attractiveness as a career. Collegiality entails replacing the timeworn bureaucratic model of schools with the professional model in which teachers are accorded respect and given increased responsibility for their professional development. In this sense, the same barriers that stand in the way of collegiality also stand in the way of attracting capable and energetic people into the teaching profession.

Because of the pervasive changes that collegial observation brings, successful implementation will require cooperation among all the key actors in a school system. In one implementation being planned in schools in

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